

NOAA TOWN HALL SCREENCAST – CLIMATE SERVICES

DR. LUBCHENCO'S REMARKS

FEBRUARY 8, 2010

SLIDE 1 [OPENING SLIDE]

Good afternoon everyone.

Thank you for tuning in today. We had planned to host a town hall meeting in Silver Spring, but the weather there today has caused us to postpone the event.

Nonetheless, I wanted to address NOAA employees directly about the exciting announcement Secretary Locke and I made this morning concerning the creation of a new line office at NOAA, the NOAA Climate Service.

This highly anticipated announcement marks another milestone in NOAA's long and exemplary history.

The NOAA Climate Service will strengthen science and climate service delivery, and significantly boost our accessibility and visibility for NOAA's many users across multiple sectors.

I want to thank Secretary Locke for his leadership in addressing the climate change challenge that our nation is facing.

The Obama Administration recognizes that climate change is one of the greatest challenges facing our nation. How we face this challenge, and how effectively we tackle the severe public health, economic and environmental threats it poses, will shape our lives and our legacy to our children and all future generations. NOAA's proposed new climate office is a major step in a critically needed new direction.

SLIDE 2 [TIME TO ACT IS NOW]

A Climate Service at NOAA is an idea whose time has come. As many of you know, because you are fielding the stream of information requests, the users of NOAA's products and services are growing rapidly – and across all sectors. There is increasing urgency to their requests for information.

Our nation is already facing the impacts of climate change. Individuals, decision-makers and governments at all levels are asking us how to best prepare their communities and businesses for the impacts of climate change. They worry about managing flood risks; frosts that drive prices up at the supermarket; and ocean acidity that is dissolving the shells of some species in the Pacific Northwest.

In just about every sector, the need for climate data and other climate information to support vital decisions is on a fast track, from requests to inform local planning policies to regional and national questions about energy and food security to worldwide focus on diminishing water resources.

Yet the nation's, and even NOAA's, climate-related information resources are currently inadequate to meet the fast accelerating demands.

NOAA has been examining how best to strengthen both climate science and services for quite awhile. For well over a year, before I came to NOAA, internal exploration, external outreach and many heartfelt discussions were underway.

Over the past year, we have thoroughly studied alternatives to determine how NOAA can best meet climate-related needs. We have benefited from substantial input from NOAA employees, stakeholders and advisory bodies such as the NOAA Science Advisory Board, the National Academies, and NOAA's regional and academic partners.

SLIDE 3: [noaa.gov/climate webpage]

Details of this process are online at www.noaa.gov/climate.

NOAA's existing framework for climate service was established well before climate services were recognized as being essential. Our current structure is not optimized for climate service delivery. Our employees have done outstanding work in advancing NOAA's suite of climate science and service within the current existing framework, but demands are growing. We must be more visible, more accessible and more responsive to our users across all sectors. We must continue to better align science and services in a way that builds on NOAA's world-class science while simultaneously strengthening service delivery.

I greatly appreciate the sustained and impressive efforts of many NOAA employees who have provided input on how we can best do this.

The time to act on these ideas to advance NOAA climate science and service and meet critical climate needs is now.

SLIDE 4 [PROPOSED LINE OFFICE MOVES]

We are proposing the new NOAA Climate Service to provide a single, visible and responsive point of entry to our excellent climate work.

Dr. Thomas R. Karl, director of NOAA's National Climatic Data Center, will serve as transitional director of the NOAA Climate Service.

I want to underscore that OAR will continue to serve as a vital NOAA line office, incubating research that leads to new knowledge as well as many valuable products and services. OAR made significant contributions to the science that opened the eyes of the world to the risks of greenhouse gas emissions, climate change and ocean acidification. Growing new research within OAR and strengthening science across NOAA remain top priorities.

As you can see, the building blocks of NOAA Climate Service will be drawn from NESDIS, NWS and OAR.

- NESDIS's Data Centers will move to our new line office.
- So will the management of the weather service's Climate Observing Network.
- Three divisions of the Earth System Research Laboratory, and the director's office will move to the Climate Service along with our Geophysical Fluid Dynamics Laboratory and the Climate Program Office.
- Note, there will not be any changes at NOS and in NOAA Fisheries.

A reorganization alone will not meet all the demands for climate services. For example, the nation is looking to NOAA for linkages between weather and climate, and sea-level rise and climate change. That will require close working relationships between the new climate office and our other line offices. Meeting the challenges effectively is a NOAA-wide endeavor.

I also want to underscore that NOAA's federal employees and contractors form a terrific team and, while the nature of some positions may change, we look ahead to building on productive partnerships. As the challenges of climate change grow, NOAA's work does too. There is plenty to do. Please be assured that no NOAA federal employee will be out of a job, and we do not expect relocations.

We are fully aware of and committed to fulfilling all labor relations obligations associated with the creation and operation of the NOAA Climate Service and we appreciate the assistance of the National Weather Service Employee Organization's leadership as we move ahead.

SLIDE 5: [Mission Vision Goals]

With a single office, rather than our current dispersed structure, NOAA will be better prepared to continue its internationally-recognized role in the end-to-end development and delivery of climate science, tools, products and information. Our agency will be a stronger partner and in a better position to help prepare America for the impacts of climate variability and change, and more unified in mitigating human influence on climate.

The vision, mission and three strategic goals reflect the extensive input that was factored into, and continues to be factored into, the planning process for the proposed climate office. The goals guided our decision-making process.

These goals shape our commitment to stay closely connected to NOAA users, to ensure that communication is working as well as possible to promote integrated service delivery nationally and across regions. We need to know that we're making the right tools available, and that these resources are reliable, timely and readily accessible.

As we build the climate science and service office, we'll continue to work closely with our regional, state, federal, academic and other partners. No one agency can tackle climate change alone, and we must work effectively within the federal family, leverage other partnerships and address gaps as needed.

As NOAA's new science enterprise evolves, we'll also need to be vigilant about tracking changing societal needs and, in particular, appreciate the growing need to link natural and socio-economic sciences to decision-making.

SLIDE 6: [REGIONAL CLIMATE SERVICE DIRECTORS]

An important element of an effective Climate Service is the interface with partners and users, and much of this happens locally and regionally. Today I am also excited to announce that NOAA is establishing six new positions for Regional Climate Services Directors. These positions will be advertised this week. They were created to provide leadership in integrating the climate service portfolio. The directors will draw on NOAA's agency-wide capabilities to manage and execute a Regional Climate Services Strategic Plan that is being developed. They will bridge interests with federal and many other regional partners, and they will be central players in regional climate assessment activities.

NOAA already has extensive regional climate capabilities and leveraging them will be one of the most important outcomes of establishing a climate line office. The six positions will be co-located in NWS Regional Headquarters.

SLIDE 7: [CLIMATE PORTAL]

Today, we are also publicly announcing a new website called NOAA's *Climate Services Portal*. This site will serve as a single point-of-entry for NOAA's climate information, data, products and services, and is a great online complement to the proposed new office.

The portal is a first step toward making the rich scope of NOAA's data and information more relevant and accessible in one easy-to-use resource.

I encourage you to visit the site, if you haven't already, to check out some of its exciting features, including an innovative online magazine,

[SLIDE 8] the 'Climate Dashboard' which lets users see a range of constantly updating climate datasets,

[SLIDE 9] and information about the climate data and products NOAA and its partners offer, accompanied by easily understood presentations about climate science and its impacts.

There is much more on this dynamic new site. The next time someone asks you what NOAA's climate work is all about, invite them to come visit climate.gov and see for themselves.

SLIDE 10: [NEXT STEPS]

We will keep you updated throughout the transition process. Today's announcement is just the beginning.

Starting tomorrow, Mary Glackin will be in Boulder to meet with the leadership of all offices engaged in the transition to begin mapping out an implementation strategy and considering how we can make this reorganization as smooth as possible. It will take time to get all the details worked out. I ask for your patience and, again, we will make sure to keep you well-informed along the way.

In the meantime, some of NOAA's leadership will be on the road to help explain our FY'11 budget to NOAA staff, constituents and partners. I am delighted about the timing because it provides a good chance to ask questions about the proposed NOAA Climate Service, too. We plan to visit Princeton, Asheville and other NOAA sites as we realize staff there will have questions, too.

SLIDE 11: [NEXT STEPS]

In the coming months, Mary Glackin will work with line office leads to continue to ensure that perspectives from every line office are considered in decision-making and implementation plans.

A reprogramming package will be submitted to the Department of Commerce this spring and then to OMB, after which it will go to Congress for consideration.

Until then, we will continue to provide the climate services that we already deliver, produce world-class scientific advances in understanding climate change, and share data, information and knowledge about climate in multiple ways. Thanks for all of the work that makes those things possible.

SLIDE 12: [FOR MORE INFORMATION]

You will find Q&As, the proposed reorganization chart, a Power Point, fact sheets and handouts, recordings from this morning's press conference and other new material online at www.noaa.gov/climate

We know you will have lots of questions as we move forward, and we encourage you to talk to your supervisors and managers.

We have also created an email address where you can submit your comments or questions. We will monitor that account and do our best to update the Q&A and other online materials to address those as best we can. That email address is- climateservice@noaa.gov

As I just mentioned the NOAA Climate Portal, climate.gov, will continue to showcase the many climate activities at NOAA

SLIDE 13: [Thank You]

Thank you for your patience. I especially want to thank our employees in OAR, the Weather Service and NESDIS who will experience the most changes. I realize uncertainty can be a challenge and I know that arriving at this decision has been a long journey. I am excited to be moving forward with this decision and I am grateful to every one of our employees.

Since NOAA's beginnings in 1807, this agency has grown with our nation. Today NOAA is on the front lines for America every day. Your work also makes a lifesaving difference internationally.

In 2008, for example, NOAA climate forecast data helped inform decisions in West and Central Africa where successful seasonal flood warnings saved lives. The early warnings led to early action, the right kinds of community preparation and fast evacuations. Anticipating future flooding also led to the first-ever pre-emptive financial appeal for preparation activities. NOAA's climate forecast data supported critical work by the Red Cross, the Red Crescent and Columbia University's Institute of International Research Institute for Climate and Society.

There are many, many such stories in the U.S. and around the world. As America and the world head into climate-related challenges, the proposed changes to NOAA's structure will enable NOAA to play a critical role in delivering new knowledge and understanding and in making them available to a wide range of users. Your scientific integrity, dedication and collaborative, transparent approach make it all possible.

Thanks for your continued support and efforts. I will update you as there is new information to share.